

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-9, 11-12, 15, 17-23, 25-27, 29-35 and 37-38 are pending in the present application. Claims 2, 10, 13-14, 16, 24, 28 and 36 were canceled. Claims 1, 9, 11-12, 15, 23, 25-27, 35 and 37-38 were amended. Reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

I. Allowed Claims and Claim Objections

In the Office Action, the Examiner stated that Claims 2, 4, 10-12, 16, 18, 24-26, 28, 30 and 36-38 respectively contain allowable subject matter. Applicants, through their attorney, express appreciation to the Examiner for this statement.

In view of the Examiner's statement of allowable subject matter, Applicants have amended independent Claim 1 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of Claim 2, which has now been canceled. Accordingly, Claim 1, as well as Claims 3-8 respectively depending therefrom, are now considered to patentably distinguish over the art and to be in condition for allowance.

In like manner, independent Claims 9, 15, 23, 27 and 35 have been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of Claims 10, 16, 24, 28 and 36, respectively, each of which has also been canceled. Accordingly, each of these independent claims, as well as Claims 11-12 respectively depending from Claim 9, Claims 17-22 respectively depending from Claim 15, Claims 25-26 respectively depending from Claim 23, Claims 29-34 respectively depending from Claim 27, and Claims 37-38 respectively depending from Claim 35, are likewise considered to now patentably distinguish over the art and to be in condition for allowance. Claims 13 and 14 have also been canceled, so that there are no remaining issues in the above application.

II. 35 U.S.C. § 103, Obviousness

The Examiner rejected Claims 1, 3, 5-9, 13-15, 17, 19-23, 27, 29 and 31-35 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Kubala et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,209,106 in

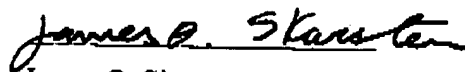
view of Egle, U.S. Patent No. 6,854,019. Applicants respectfully consider these rejections to be overcome by the amendments to the claims made herein.

III. Conclusion

It is respectfully urged that the subject application is patentable over the Kubala et al. and Egle references, and over any combination thereof, and is now in condition for allowance.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number if in the opinion of the Examiner such a telephone conference would expedite or aid the prosecution and examination of this application.

DATE: July 5, 2005



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